

It's All About Victory
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Romans 7:7-25 (NIV)

Why are we surprised?

We hear the stories of people who take a wild animal or reptile that was not meant to be domesticated and try to make it a pet. In most cases what is the outcome?

It's hard to TAME an animal or reptile whose very instinct is the ATTACK and DESTROY. When they do we should not be surprised. They are made that way.

Sometimes we Christians get into our spiritual bubble with our church friends and then back in the workplace or neighborhood unsaved people shock us with their behavior.

They lie, cheat, cuss, commit adultery, blaspheme our Lord. Why are we surprised? As Susan often says in that situation: "What do you expect? They're PAGANS. That's what PAGANS do!" But...WHAT ABOUT CHRISTIANS?

Last week in Chapter 6, you learned that we no longer have to be "slaves to sin" because of Christ's death, burial, and resurrection.

We have His power living in us so that we can be "dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body...do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness...offer them to God." (6:11-13, partial)

The last verse of Chapter 6 summed it up: "For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Thanks to God's wonderful FREE GIFT of salvation, Christians avoid ETERNAL DEATH and get ETERNAL LIFE.

I'm GRATEFUL for SALVATION! But, if I'm REALLY SAVED...why do I still have these SINFUL THOUGHTS and sometimes not just thoughts but SINFUL DEEDS? More importantly, HOW CAN I OVERCOME THEM so I'm NOT A SLAVE TO SIN?

Paul knew you'd be asking that question!

Let's look at Chapter 7 beginning in verses 7-12

7 What shall we say, then? Is the law sinful? Certainly not! Nevertheless, I would not have known what sin was had it not been for the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, "You shall not covet."^[a] 8 But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting. For apart from the law, sin was dead. 9 Once I was alive apart from the law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. 10 I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. 11 For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the

commandment put me to death. 12 So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good.

- Question: If I get caught speeding, is it the SPEED LIMIT sign's fault?
- How about this: You're cruising along and just as you pass a police car you spot him hidden behind a blind spot. When that cop pulls out and turns on the lights what is my reaction? You're mad at him for HIDING!!!
- Question: What's the maximum speed limit on the interstate in this part of the country? When I decide to drive 80 miles an hour, what am I thinking? I can get away with that!
- Verse 7: Is the law sinful? NO. It's just the thing that tells me what IS SINFUL.
- In verse 7 Paul uses a basic example of human nature when we learn what's against the law. Coveting.
- When we're born, do we know coveting is a SIN? How do we learn not to covet...and steal?
- When we were told not to COVET much less to STEAL someone's stuff what did it make us want to do?
- "Do not open until December 25th" What do we want to do?
- "Don't touch those cookies, they are for the party!" What do we want to do?

Statement: Temptation occurs when DO NOT meets WHY NOT!

- If you want to see your kids DO something just tell them... (NOT) to do it.

Verse 8: ...sin seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of coveting."

Verse 13 sums it up:

13 Did that which is good, then, become death to me? By no means! Nevertheless, in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it used what is good to bring about my death, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful.

- The SPEED LIMIT sign doesn't MAKE ME SIN. It's there to KEEP ME FROM SINNING!
- But, Paul knew about human nature...verse 14:

14 We know that the law is spiritual; but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin.

- I am UNSPIRITUAL. For the next eleven verses Paul gives a SINFUL SELF PORTRAIT. See if this sounds familiar? LISTEN CLOSELY...it gets complicated.

15 I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. 16 And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. 17 As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. 18 For I know that good itself does not dwell in me, that is, in my sinful nature.[b] For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to

do—this I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.

21 So I find this law at work: Although I want to do good, evil is right there with me. 22 For in my inner being I delight in God's law; 23 but I see another law at work in me, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within me. 24 What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death? 25 Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord!

So then, I myself in my mind am a slave to God's law, but in my sinful nature a slave to the law of sin.

- Whew! I don't know about you, but for me, that's like looking in a mirror!
- Paul knew we'd be asking these questions so he shared TRANSPARENTLY about his own struggles.
- Scholars disagree as to whether he's talking about his life before Christ or after.
- I'm going with AFTER, because I think it encourages us that EVEN AFTER HE WAS A CHRISTIAN, THE APOSTLE PAUL STRUGGLED with sin.

This passage is SO REAL that I love looking at how Eugene Peterson PARAPHRASED it in The Message:

Romans 7:18-25

The Message (MSG)

17-20 But I need something more! For if I know the law but still can't keep it, and if the power of sin within me keeps sabotaging my best intentions, I obviously need help! I realize that I don't have what it takes. I can will it, but I can't do it. I decide to do good, but I don't really do it; I decide not to do bad, but then I do it anyway. My decisions, such as they are, don't result in actions. Something has gone wrong deep within me and gets the better of me every time.

21-23 It happens so regularly that it's predictable. The moment I decide to do good, sin is there to trip me up. I truly delight in God's commands, but it's pretty obvious that not all of me joins in that delight. Parts of me covertly rebel, and just when I least expect it, they take charge.

24 I've tried everything and nothing helps. I'm at the end of my rope.

- The APOSTLE PAUL is as MESSED UP AS ME!
- Question: How does it encourage you to read what Paul has said about himself?
- (Discussion)

[If time] Optional Question: Ever see someone who you KNOW FOR SURE is a born again believer...kind of let their guard down like Paul did and you say. I feel better...so and so is a sinner just like me! (Story: Grandmother says a bad word).

- Paul says: "I truly delight in Gods commands...but parts of me rebel, and just when I least expect it they TAKE CHARGE (emphasis mine)."
- Have you ever had those moments when you are feeling so SPIRIT FILLED and you're just praying and praising God. "Lord, you're awesome and wonderful and I just want to live to glorify you..." THEN..."Oh dear! Where did that thought come from?"
- I mean you're in the WORSHIP SERVICE and SIN just flashes through your mind.
- Or you're interacting with someone and something sinful just POPS OUT of your mouth.
- There's a JOKING saying people use: "Did I say that...(OUT LOUD)?"
- I've never been to an Alcoholics Anonymous meeting, but I understand that they start by each person saying something like: "Hi, I'm Paul and I'm an alcoholic."
- At some of our HopeQuest events the testimonies sometimes begin with "I am powerless over certain behaviors like..."
- The great Apostle Paul is basically saying: "Hi, I'm Paul and I'm just a sinner saved by grace who still struggles with my sinful nature."
- How many of us this morning could raise our right hand and say (repeat after me)
- "Hi, I'm [name].... I'm just a sinner save by grace....I still struggle with my sinful nature....I'm as messed up as Paul!

Okay, let's summarize: I'm saved by grace and heaven is assured for me. But, I still struggle with sin, right? So, what does that say about how REAL my salvation is?

If there is time: Quotes from "How The Gospel Brings Us All The Way Home" By Derek Thomas (end of Chapter 1)

So, what's the Takeaway?

- We will struggle with sin...but the POWER OF GOD living in us through His Holy Spirit can help us not be SLAVES TO SIN.
- To Quote Derek Thomas: *"The key to subduing the downward drag of sin in our lives is to know the impulse of gratitude that follows the experience of forgiveness and reconciliation. Law-keeping out of love is the true path of holiness."*